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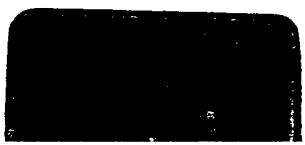
WAIFS, OR POEMS

BY BERNARD GRADY

1. Poetry, American.



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WAIFS, OR POEMS
BY BERNARD GRADY

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FOREWORD

IN this little volume are harvested the first-fruits of my Muse, gleaned at very indefinite periods within the past sixteen months, with the exception of a few early poems; for various-dealing Fortune decreed not I should be a child of leisure and devote my days according to my choice.

I partake of the painful uncertainty natural to an unheralded intruder into the sacred precincts of Parnassus, as to the reception his first efforts may receive, and yet am nevertheless hopeful for them, and shall appreciate any indulgence my friends and the public may extend these youthful labors.

Till now these thoughts have wrought nothing, nor can so long as they repose in the tray of my trunk; but henceforth they are the world's, since I assume the responsibility of sending them forth, in doing which I believe, if no great good is expressed in them, at least no evil is.

I bid them Adieu, believing they will bespeak themselves, and charge them to do what good they can in their pilgrimage.

BERNARD EDWARD GRADY.

August 30, 1906.

NOV 19 FEB

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Grieving May's Departure	1
My Lost Sister	2
Return of Spring	4
The Triumph of Easter	7
Our Loss	8
In Arlington, Sweetly Sleeping	10
Love's Anomaly	12
Fortune or Love?	15
The Sustaining Angel	17
When I am Gone	20
Would You?	21
A Rescued Fly	23
Blest of a Woman's Love	24
Your Kiss Abideth	25
If the Heart be Good	26
Lest It Depart	27
Dissolution	29
If Each One Did His Part	30
Woman	32
Affairs of the Heart	33
The Harvest of Delay	34
This Work	35
Why Not Let It Slumber	36
Till I Met You	38
Why I'm Sad To-day	39
Burning Your Letters	40

CONTENTS

PAGE

To Mattie 40
Using To-day 42
The Poet 43
What Is My Life? 45
Day by Day 46
Previous Disposition 48
To His Majesty, the Safety-Pin 49
What a Man Should Give 50
Rejoice with Me 52
Heart Desolation 53
Those Eyes of Blue 55
A Passing Face 56
Lost 57
Two Words 60
Ye Silent Strings 63
Do we Die but Once? 66
Spectator or Spectacle 69
A Tribute to Trust 71
The Dead 74

WAIFS, OR POEMS
BY BERNARD GRADY

GRIEVING MAY'S DEPARTURE

Good-by is the word that comes to rest
Its weight on the heart of the lightest breast;
And wakens the soul to thought of gloom,
The word of all words I would entomb.

The friend that steals from my side away—
As all do steal — is the lovely May:
Fair queen of the months, O why depart!
And leave in regret this mutual heart?

So few seem to come with joys as true,
As shine from the skies of thy deep blue;
Or gleam from the earth in countless eyes
And scent all the air where thy way lies.

Full short was the day of thy sojourn,
And thoughts of the soul to thee will turn;
Vain man will recall the solemn truth —
Thus fleet are the days of love and youth!

To-day in the flush of the heat and strife,
Absorbed in affairs of this false life,
To-morrow gone — like the sun that's set,
O say, like him shall we rise in beauty yet?

Sweet May, come again and make us glad,
Nor stay long away from the Earth so sad,
O come with the joys you always bring,
And teach us new songs of praises to sing.

So soon we too must depart this earth,
With its oceans of sorrow and rivers of mirth;
May we also bring joy as the May in her bloom,
And garner sweet rest past the grave and the tomb.

May 25, 1898.

MY LOST SISTER

She departed with the summer,
  Departed to a clime
Where the seasons do not vary,
  Where it's ever Springtime.

When nature paled and fell asleep,
  In her grave in the earth,
The sunlight of our home went back
  To Him who gave her birth.

And fain would we have detained her,
  Had it been our power,
But the Planter abruptly called,
  And reclaimed the flower.

Reclaimed it to fairer gardens,
  In beauty there to bloom,
And in untainted atmosphere
  Diffuse its sweet perfume.

Why, we asked ourselves, 'mid our grief,
  Should she be called so young?
But were rebuked, as came the thought —
  Thy will, O Lord, be done.

Although we comprehend not why
  Youth should be thus cut down,
We know that what is lost in Him
  Shall some sweet day be found.

We believe we shall meet again
  In a life that succeeds,
In a day when convened shall be
  All nations and all creeds; —

That to be called away in youth,
  Pure innocence to vice unknown,
Gives more promise than tempted age
  Of a seat on Heaven's throne.

As the poet has truly said,
  "The grave is not life's goal";
For beyond that gloomy region
  Else doth await the soul!

Then sigh thee not, O troubled heart,
For the spirit that has flown,
For in a better land it lives,
Beyond the starry dome.

To-day, while her dust reposes
Beneath Linconia's sod,
Her spirit, ever blessed thought,
Is resting with its God.

October, 1899.

RETURN OF SPRING

Sweet step of Spring, have I thee heard?
And comes that music from a bird?
Has magic transformed nature's face,
And called to life what did seem waste?
Or do my eyes and ears deceive?

Far lighter now doth seem my tread,
And dulness quick away has fled;
And life seems new, and oh, how sweet!
What has performed this wondrous feat?
For surely I am not deceived?

Deceived? why no, not so, my friend,
Replies from birds and flowers blend;
Thou hath not erred, for she is come,
And trees will bloom and bees will hum,
And life will conquer death again.

We come to sound no false alarms,
With her that gives to life new charms,
Alone come we to do a part
In making happy mortal heart;
No longer doubt that Spring is come.

Foretelling her return again,
Since thus you speak my doubts do end.
You flee the thought that I'm unwise
By error of my ears or eyes,
And glad am I that I am not.

Again, mild one, thou art come back;
Awak'ning nature marks thy track,
By landscapes dead, now fair and green,
And dreary days now bright, serene,
Which wake the heart to glad response.

The birds sing carols 'mid the trees,
And fragrance fills the balmy breeze;
The air with dainty music rings,
Such as comes not from courts of kings,
For God's musicians sound their notes!

Once more the sap has upward crept,
And plant life wakes — enough has slept;
Awakes to life, though it be brief,
Yet life, since Spring in sweet relief
Is come with blessings so divine.

Dare ye to say there is no God
Who wields o'er all His mighty rod?
To nature look and get her proof
Unto this great and living truth,
That more than man hath done all this!

Instinct alone enough affords,
To trust in Him Who season's cords
Can strike at will to death and gloom,
Or better yet, to life and bloom;
Which deeds defy the will of man.

Fair youth, behold a lesson true,
The Spring of Life belongs to you;
Fresh now that life and undefiled,
On it has Heaven sweetly smiled,
Nor turned away because of Sin.

In spring's bright days the husbandman
Lets seed that's sound fall in his land,
And waits to see a worthy yield
Of grain, from that sound-seed sown field,
When comes the merry harvest time.

But having placed therein the seed,
He keeps the youthful plant from weed;
Keeps fresh the soil about the roots,
That harvest days may find the fruits
Matured, and from corruption free.

If you would reap a harvest rife,
Be careful of that Spring of Life;
Then mould the thoughts! then guide the acts!
And set their feet on upward tracks,
That terminate at Heaven's gate.

So keep bright Springtime in your heart
Through winter's gloom and sorrow's smart;
And in thy weakness look above,
The Seat of Strength, the Seat of Love,
Will be your all sufficient aid.

May, 1900.

THE TRIUMPH OF EASTER

The Lord arose on Easter Day;
O Jew, defiance to thy deed!
He rose His slayers to redeem,
And for all sin to intercede.

Defeat, O grave! He burst thy bonds,
And came the victor o'er Death,
To prove that man who rightly lives
May live beyond his mortal breath.

O Sin, defeat! thy rule is broke,
In Resurrection man has hope;
The light now shines — the night recedes,
And in the dark no more we mope.

The gloom that settled o'er the land,
  When undeserving death He bore
By hand of man, for sin of man,
  Is now dispelled forevermore.

Because He rose, I too, shall rise;
  The gloomy grave cannot retain
Its burden longer than the burst
  Of that immortal trumpet strain.

Then I will rise, and to my Lord
  In triumph I shall take my way;
And round the throne I'll praise Him e'er
  Because He rose on Easter Day.

April, 1901.

OUR LOSS

A thunder-bolt has fallen on
  America; both far and near,
And wrought by its ill-starred descent,
  A loss which Earth cannot repair.

Vain hope! that led us to believe
  That Providence would heal his wound,
For heart-born words sent up to God
  Did not receive their much-craved boon.

The news that flashed across the wires
  Each day spoke him recovering,

But human skill saw not the hand
  Of Death about him hovering.

Thus hope was up till Friday night,
  And then did skill claim its defeat;
The stimulants no longer served
  To make his noble heart to beat.

Again the wires announced the news,
  So sad that fondest hope was fled,
And trusting souls broke down at these
  Heart-rending words, "Our Chief is dead"!

And shall we ask why this should be,
  And murmur at his loss I pray?
Or with the slumberer in Christ
  Humbly admit, "It is God's way."

Not once did he complain to go,
  He was prepared to cross the span,
No fears did haunt his parting hour,
  He lived and died a Christian man.

Well had he won all life can give
  To him who climbs nor idle waits,
And with a grateful people's love
  Triumphant passes through the Gates.

O God, Thou Comforter Supreme!
  Console his kin and his dear wife,

For whom he rallied e'en in Death,
And comforted — last act in life.

Console Thou her, an invalid,
Whose grief a nation duly shares,
And whisper in her stricken ear,
"We'll meet beyond this Vale of Tears."

And do Thou guide the sturdy one
Who sadly undertakes to steer
The Ship of State, whose Captain dead
We mourn with Sorrow's bitter tear.

And in its present upward path,
Give him the grace to guide it on,
Which will, when he shall quit the helm,
Place him where Love and Fame doth crown.

September 23, 1901.

IN ARLINGTON, SWEETLY SLEEPING

Fair heights above the stream
That flows in beauty on,
A right fit resting-place are ye,
With green and grassy lawn,

For those within thy grounds,
Who sleep the years away;

Whose ev'ry grave, with loving hearts,
We gladly deck to-day.

Again the flowers come,
The noble work to aid,
As if against the sacred time
Their journey had been made.

Long years the union men
Alone slept in thy grounds;
But sad events of nearer years
Are marked by new-made mounds.

About thy elder beds
More heroes we have lain —
The victims of another strife,
For suff'ring brothers slain.

Together there they lie,
Cut down by war's ill breath;
The North, the South, the blue, the gray,
No longer foes in Death!

No war-cry more will come,
No sound will rouse their sleep,
Nor stealthy scout from foeman's rank
By Angel sentry creep.

His watch will steadfast be
Above that camp so still,

Until the trumpet call shall wake
  The dead of vale and hill.

To these, America,
  Your station proud you owe;
In danger's hour who forward sprang
  And crushed the awful foe.

O Liberty, salute
  Thy each sustaining son,
Who gave his all and laid it by —
  The course he'd scarce begun!

O Seat of Government,
  An honor that they sleep
Thy portals nigh, to mind us of
  The blood-bought trust we keep.

Sleep on, and take your rest,
  In Jesus sleep, and trust
The proper keeping of your graves
  To grateful ones — to us.

May 20, 1902.

LOVE'S ANOMALY

The way of Life would dreary be,
  Devoid of all its joy and bloom,
A state of happiless degree —
  A cheerless stretch unto the tomb;

But, favored soul, a gift was thine,
  Whose magic name I scarce need call,
Since gladly known to most mankind,
  To ward away this threat'ning pall.

Two lives I've seen forever blest
  By love's sweet spell which made them one;
And through all trials have stood the test,
  Serenely stood — till life was done.
And when the shadow fell at last,
  And Death's lone valley opened wide,
This love of Earth, about to pass,
  Foretold the sweets beyond the tide.

Two more I've seen, where Death stole in
  And tore away the mutual heart,
And from the soul's it might have been,
  No ray of hope but did depart;
And starless night her curtain drew,
  And over softly smiling skies
A somber cloud its mantle threw,
  And reigned the pain that never dies.

Yet Death, thy work is mild to this —
  The cruelest fate to which man's heir,
To feel the fires of Eros' bliss,
  His soul enflame with fullest share,
Whose object ne'er can rouse in turn
  That love which doth his heart enslave,

And ever must his spirit burn,
  Beyond the balm of Earth to lave.

O Love! why art thou so unkind?
  Thou joy-crowned! why bring us woe?
Affection why so oft to bind
  To hearts that shed no kindred glow?
Why wreck a life which thou couldst make?
  O why! anomaly supreme?
What ghastly pleasure canst thou take
  In shatt'ring man's ethereal dream?

O echoes of the Nile, awake,
  And lend my ear your mournful tale;
Ye mighty sphinx, in trembling shake,
  The cry is Cleopatra's wail!
A serpent's fang was sweeter meat
  Than life without her Antony;
And Egypt's throne far less could treat,
  With all its claims for life, than he.

Nor is respect to classes shown,
  Thou dealest with each human soul;
And Egypt's queen stands not alone
  Upon thy ghastly honor roll.
Come not my way, if thou wouldst sow
  Within my heart this bitterness,
Pass on, nor let me ever know
  The awful sting thou dost possess!

April 21, 1905.

FORTUNE OR LOVE?

A fate unkind once came between
Two lovers and their brightest dream;
The future which seemed brightly theirs
Threw off her smile and bathed in tears.

The maid refused to leave her home,
In wedded life afar to roam,
For Fortune called the youth away,
While Love would have him ever stay.

He could remain and know Love's bliss,
At cost of worldly fortune's miss,
But Fortune played his clouded eyes;
Pursuit of her appeared more wise.

For chance of earthly fortune gave
The rarest pearl this side the grave;
And she to Wisdom played the fool,
O what home ties — true love to rule?

The trees near where they parted told
To me one eve, when forth I strolled,
The trembling words the stars and they
In anguish heard that fateful day.

The youth spoke first, and Nature paused
As if reversed some hand her laws,

And Gods of Night came near and wrote,
On fadeless scroll, the words I quote.

"When in your eyes no more I slake
Love's thirsting glance, my heart will break.
In years to come, with spirit gone,
I'll plod my dreary course along.

"And when Death comes, transporting me
To lands where dwells no agony,
With joy I'll don his dreaded mask,
And quit me of this weary task.

"For such is Life, your love without,
To mitigate each fear and doubt,
To make the troubled wave seem smooth,
And sharpest pang as balm to soothe."

In vain the list'ner tried to speak,
And colorless was all her cheek;
Forth from her side he calmly went,
And Night her sighing breezes lent.

And Fortune came, but what its worth,
Companioned by Affection's dearth?
And oft he wished he'd stayed behind
In lesser state — with Love entwined.

When years were gone — in twilight's hour
A maiden sat within her bower,

And mused on days when Life to her
An object held without a peer.

And as the past came swiftly up,
She drank again the bitter cup;
And looking on the evening star,
Her heart again felt all its fire.

But Discipline, full cold and stern,
Now bade her mind such thoughts to spurn,
To bravely bear the lot she'd cast,
Nor live again within the past.

And as Life drew him to a close,
In wakeless sleep they sought repose;
Each, from the other, laid afar,
To tune of Fate's pathetic lyre.

O hearts that love, let fam'ly ties,
Nor naught besides, between arise,
But claim your own, nor know the wage
No other claim can e'er assuage!

May 6, 1905.

THE SUSTAINING ANGEL

Partakers of life that mortals know,
The present ye have — the future's before;
The past is gone, and many bemoan
The use they've made of the days that are flown.

And yet they mean sometime to reform,
For vicious man in his wildest career
In hours resolves, and the breast grows warm,
At thoughts which bring to the eye a tear.

Sometimes there falls 'cross the way he goes
A whisper that speaks of peace and repose,
And yielding him up to this kind friend,
His wayward ways he seeks to amend.
The call he had heard, but in his despair
Had deem'd it a demon to mock his plight,
And fled at its sound as the hound-chased hare;
But still it came — dismissing his night.

Within the dark walls of a prison cell
An innocent lay and thought it was well;
Griev'd law had ordain'd his life should redress
A crime which the actor did not confess.
I say, to the last, by unseen arms upborne,
He felt that the right must finally win;
His friends gave him joy where they meant to mourn,
For the guilty came to answer his sin.

Ye toilers whose efforts have been your best,
Ye living and ye who have gone to your rest,
How could you struggle on, nor pause,
When your labors met not man's applause?
Did a voice seem to say some coming age
Of sounder thought would adjudge their worth, —

Would place your names on the rolls of the sage,
And crown your deeds 'round the fam'ly hearth?

A conqueror comes whose name is Fate,
On whose wild caprices all things wait;
But only a moment last his defeats,
In vict'ry he trembles — he turns — and retreats!
O bosom! as fast as he wrecks thy domain,
And strews long thy track some grief,
Hope e'er is nigh to whisper again,
"Some future will bring you desired relief."

Whate'er disappointment bedims man's dreams, —
A common fruition that follows, it seems;
At thy sweet sigh away floats the cloud,
The soul flings off its impotent shroud,
The temporal day becomes less a charm
To dazzle the soul and rob it of life;
At last we flee from the false and its harm,
To the perfect joy, whose parent is strife!

Sweet Angel of Hope, when Life's light fades,
And flickers out in the Vale's deep shades,
Make haste thy bark to the Evening Shore,
As a final service to row me o'er;
Thy cheering presence no more I'll need,
To caress a wound or banish a sigh,
Where spirits ne'er wake to pain and bleed,
And the days of repining for aye are by.

May 16, 1905.

WHEN I AM GONE

Some future day, when I am gone,
I wonder will the world go on;
Or if its course and mission will
Abruptly stop nor be fulfilled?
I would not have all men to know
This probably impending woe,
Which might disturb their peace of mind,
And thus become in me unkind.

So I dismiss the serious thought,
For much of worry has it wrought;
And try to hope that after all
Through space will swing the same old ball.
I pray the dwellers on its face
Will make of it a better place,
And may the years that outlive me
Advance the race in harmony!

Methinks when in the tomb I lay,
I'll wake to hear what men will say,—
To hear the false who played me friends,
As if deceptive were my lens,
Unfold the weak, dispar'ging traits,
So passive at the hands of Fates,
Right char'tibly my deeds to do,
As grants the weakest point of view.

And yet are they whose lives touched mine
And both were blessed and brighter shined;
Some kindly act may be was done,
Unseen to eyes of most who run,
And He who knows how best to praise
The things that round out earthly days,
A gallant hero took me down,
And placed a jewel in my crown.

So build your monuments, old Earth,
To speak thy sons of manly worth, —
The few with deeds by chance revealed;
But leave unsung the larger field.
Content are they none can deny
Their obelisks will be as high,
When dawns, at last, adjustment's day,
And each receive their righteous pay.

May 17, 1905.

WOULD YOU?

I would not wound a heart — would you?
'Tis such an unkind thing to do;
A heart with brightly burning fires,
That burn when Death itself expires;
And whose enduring flame began
When you stooped nigh — its glow to fan;
A heart that knew you but in trust,
O better had the sword been thrust!

We long may live and cause much pain,
Our crimes may make our days a stain,
May cause a loving God to frown,
And cast our ransom'd spirits down;
But scarce can they attain a place
That will redound to less of grace
Than slighting thought or word or deed,
For which some heart will keenly bleed.

I hold it equal to the worst,
Immortal man can call accursed!
And sooner had I led the French,
To Moscow's fires they could not quench,
And let them perish in the snows,
While fleeing from the city's woes,
Than plunge in tears a heart of love, —
The sweetest gift all else above!

The trait'rous Greek for whom there died
Leonidas — fair Sparta's pride!
And all his band of faithful souls,
One infamy no more claim holds!
And through the ages I might tell
Of ghastly deeds that would repel,
Yet be unable to impart
A parallel to wound of heart.

May 19, 1905.

BY BERNARD GRADY

A RESCUED FLY

Why came ye here without your sphere?
But man oft goes to court his woes,
And should not blame in thee the same.
Thy brother now just bit my brow,
But I'll not by and see thee die;
From treach'rous cup I bear thee up.
He who made me also did thee,
And me He gave life past the grave;
Beyond the Earth ye know no birth.
I, too, once fell, and Christ beheld
My helpless state, and ere 'twas late,
With outstretched arm drew me from harm;
But His life gave my own to save.
In saving thine I give not mine;
I know no price or sacrifice,
No thorns, no nails, no midnight wails;
No blood, no tear, no sepulcher!
I am not safe; at times I chafe,
On danger's brink to stoop and drink;
If some swift tide should reach my side
And bear me where no help is near,
As this poor fly so should I die.
But I believe He will relieve
My fainting soul where'er it roll.

May 26, 1905.

BLEST OF A WOMAN'S LOVE

Me, in the gift of your Love do you bless,
Till of the measure no words can express;
Scarce can I b'lieve I am honored thus much,
What in myself such a passion could touch?

Know ye the heart you have given to me?
Think to another it never will flee?
Woman is fickle, and often unwise,
Calling as Love a brief fancy that dies.

Yet I am willing to take it as true,
B'lieve thou art guileless as morning's own dew;
For you've agreed to embark in my keeping,
Taste of my joy and indulge in my weeping.

Kingdoms of Earth, I prefer me to rule
Realm of her heart though I sat on a stool,
Than to be wielder of powers you hold,
If at the cost of her life's least control.

Riches ne'er smiled long the track of my years
Ere she bestowed the rich love that is hers;
Nor can you rank with the fortunes of men,
Wealth of the type that is mine to the end.

Thou who hast sent such a treasure my way
May I protect it from going astray,

Feed it on food that its nature doth crave,
Keep it from knowing transfer — or the grave.

Blasts of the North not again can ye harm,
Sun of the Summer become over warm;
Ills have known flight on the wings of some dove,
Left me secure in a woman's deep Love.

June 11, 1905.

YOUR KISS ABIDETH

Dear, do you mind that kiss you implanted,
In the beautiful days that are gone,
When parting I stood there enchanted,
And dreamed of a time too delicious to dawn?

A spirited kiss! a passionate meeting
Of lips that united in a holy embrace;
With a rapture unwonted my heart was beating,
And deeply the blush stole up to your face.

Just to tease, your head you turned to the side,
By way of protecting the loveliest of portals,
And again and again my efforts denied,
At last to resign most submissive of mortals.

And oh, the sweet vision my heart conjured up!
It hallowed the future and gladdened its years;
But cold-hearted Fate changed the draft of my cup,
And where I supped nectar has left me but tears.

In your beauty and grace I knew a delight
  Which scarcely again to my heart shall unfold,
And worshiped as truly as ever did knight
  In the lost and chivalrous ages of old.

But reasons so sacred my heart them must hold,
  Unkindly enshrouded this dream of our bliss;
And yet till in Death they are rigid and cold,
  My lips shall repine for another such kiss.

June 15, 1905.

IF THE HEART BE GOOD

The years have reflected this truth to my soul —
  That men, at the best, are creatures of mood;
Oft given to skirt Equanimity's bowl,
  From the dish of Life's rubs to partake their food.
In vain may they strive not to yield the fight,
  When trifling events annoy the good will,
For who is strong when Perverseness would blight?
  Alas, that his reign should govern us still!

Since Eden no more is mortal's sweet lot,
  On the calmest soul some ripples stir;
The serenest blood will in times grow hot,
  To prove of the animal man is a share.
The wounds he inflicts when his pets inthrall,
  Are happ'lessly born of a happiless mood;
I think we would learn to forgive them all
  If, searching the heart, we found it was good.

When our friends forget sometimes to be sweet,
And recklessly do unlovely things,
If we will recall each manly feat,
And not fight back — their moods will take wings.
I hold it is wrong to condemn as mean
The lives that offend while swayed by a mood;
And odorous flowers we Pilgrims might glean,
In forgetting a hurt when the heart is good.

We cannot afford in a life so short,
Our tempers to lose for a moment's length,
Embitt'ring the days that should be fraught
In gathering Love and Beauty and Strength;
For like unto winds that disturb some bay,
And seduce the native calm for awhile,
Will the strife nursed of men fly away,
And the grave give back the buried smile.

June 22, 1905.

LEST IT DEPART

O Death, thou dread retainer on Time,
Thou whom I've shunned — I loudly call;
To-night will explore thy wildest hall.
Too sweet this hour — too near sublime!
I feel some pain its pleasure will mar,
And give it the flight of a falling star.

Without it care I not to live
The days vain memory would bring,

To which the merest shades could cling
Of what its presence once did give.
I'd fly a future immersed of tears, —
Of suff'ring for that which no more appears.

I trust to chance no duplicate,
Lest it should die, I'd die me first,
O Death, I adore thee whom I've cursed!
Importune thee lest thou be too late;
And if e'er kind, as some would say,
From this sweet scene enfold me away.

But hark! I hear an Angel say,
"Thou timorous soul it may not be,
From Life's mingled lot thou canst not flee,
Upon its stage each part must play!
Nor do joys bloom forever of life,
Thy spirit must needs be known to strife.

"Tis wicked to wish for premature Death, —
Afraid of what the future hath
To strew along the unknown path,
Afraid regrets will tinge its breath;
— To lull the heart with its rapture at noon,
Though Mercy demand indefinite swoon.

"Of Life 'tis apart — go meet thy fate;
A sorrow but addeth a deeper tone,
In touching a life where joys have blown,

And beneath its cross springs much that's great;
Live on, and discipline thy soul
If it stays or flees — this joy you hold."

July 2, 1905.

DISSOLUTION

Some morn my pen I'll lay aside,
Among these scenes no more to bide,
Will bid farewell unto my Muse,
And mingle with the dust and dews;
That which struck awe to eyes of men,
The meanest worm shall conquer then,
And passions which my bosom swell,
The falling clods shall sound your knell.

And then my Soul so long confined,
  And made to dwell 'mid passions wild,
These alien cords shall cease to bind
  Your life to things that would beguile;
Then thou shalt know thy true abode,
  Which in thy visions thou hast seen,
When throwing off thy mortal load
  Thou dar'dst to peep beyond the screen.

Yet there be creeds which men would claim
  Are founded on the truest rock,
Supported of Christ's holy name,
  Whose attributes they grossly mock.

They tell us some immortal Souls
  Shall be forever burned of fire,
While some shall reach the Heavenly goals,
  And bliss eternally acquire.

I feel, if waking 'mid that weal,
  I find some whom I love amiss,
By whose fair sides I might not kneel,
  And claim them with a long-lost kiss, —
That in some hopeless other state,
  Where nothing reigns but keen despair,
Their paths had known an opening gate, —
  No fullest joy could be my share!

For all their creeds I not believe
  That God thus deals with Souls of men;
His Love is mighty to reprieve,
  And He will exercise it then.
We all are creatures of His will,
  And equal in His eyes appear;
The Love that made will keep us still,
  And no discrimination share.

July 5, 1905.

IF EACH ONE DID HIS PART

If each one did his separate part
There'd be no overburdened heart,
No brother sink beside the road,

Because he bore a double load.
This would mean duty to all men
As duty comes within our ken,
And if her laws we did not break,
To few regrets our hearts would wake.
There is that in us which would do
This honest part if we were true;
Man erreth not through lack of sight,
In knowing which of ways is right, —
Because he stoppeth not to think
Of what great purpose he's a link,
Which has a pressure to sustain
As great as any in the chain.
But for a blunder some one made
There ne'er had charged the Light Brigade;
That fatal day of Waterloo,
When great Napoleon withdrew,
Might not have been had Blucher's speed
Been equal to the hour's need.
'Tis true this part no fame may bring,
And we may court its charming ring; —
Earth's honors are but fleeting things,
To which no lasting flavor clings, —
As fickle as they who bestow
The flow'ry garland on thy brow,
And may be ere its blossoms pale,
Thy right to wear it will assail.
My wish would be to do my share,
No matter what its burdens were,

So none might weep or suffer pain
Because my yoke on them had lain;
And dying bed will softer lay,
If thus I close my earthly day.

August 12, 1905.

WOMAN

A woman has inspired my best wrought deeds,
And any heights I've climbed I climbed for her;
Her heart have found the sweetest of all creeds,
To win her smile to me was action's spur,
No eloquence of man like it could stir!

And yet when she an evil angel came,
My soul forgot all good it ever knew;
If she could sin I scarce could see the shame,
And sweet the sin I stooped with her to woo, —
I sometimes think almost too sweet to rue.

Had I to good account the moments turned,
That in her witching presence I have spent,
I know that higher heights I might have earned, —
But doubt if I would be the more content;
And what I thus have missed do not repent.

I pray that she will always come my way,
And shape my life as she has heretofore,
And I will share with her my fullest day,

And if I reach a star she too shall soar;
With her I have no fear of what's before.

O woman! when I close my earthly days,
May thy sweet tones be last to greet my ear,
Let thy fair face adorn my dying gaze,
Until the gath'ring shadows it shall blur,
And Heaven dawns; — than thee alone more fair!

August 19, 1905.

AFFAIRS OF THE HEART

If affairs of the heart run smoothly along,
What a diff'rence it makes in this life that we live!
How it lightens the tasks that the hours give,
And makes the world seem a bower of song.

For who may be sad when loved and in love?
Are not the emotions all subject to one?
Dependent on which as the planets the sun,
If the life of the heart in harmony move.

But Love is bound by no law to stay
And control the passions productive of woe,
Unless of himself full measure he know;
In all the world he takes no other pay.

Let Love depart, and the ballast power is gone,
The scenes it softened are strenuous now,
And droops the head that disdained to bow;
Like a ship without rudder, the heart flounders on,

'Tis this — if a wish you'd have from me,
May ever the things of thy heart go well; —
May Love therein full largely dwell,
And the burdens of life will rest lightly on thee.

September 3, 1905.

THE HARVEST OF DELAY

Not even Sleep will come and save
My soul awhile from pain,
And call it from its fond hope's grave,
Where ling'ring is in vain.
I followed where Ambition led,
And bade me win the world,
And while I rushed on in his tread
I loved a winsome girl.

I spoke no word of love to her;
I meant to make it known,
And little dreamed my doom so near,
The chance so nearly flown!
While I was winning what is naught,
Unless her love adorn,
A wiser one the rosebud sought,
And left me but the thorn!

She is another's; yet I feel
My love for her is fresh and strong,

And nightly when in pray'r I kneel,
I wish her life a song.
It may be wrong to love her now,
If so, I sin each day;
Alas! two hearts to one should bow,
For one in grief must pay.

September 10, 1905.

THIS WORK

It is a joy
Which should alloy,
The sternest toil we meet to-day,
To know it true,
This work we do
Is unreceptive to decay.

For good or ill
It ever will
A certain cognizance receive;
For action live
And char'cter give
To deeds the future will achieve.

There lived a race
Whose work we trace
In the time-enduring pyramid;
Some unborn day

Will homage pay
To us, whose work no less can be hid.

These hands that rear
Must soon forbear,
And fold themselves in final pause;
But what they raise
Abides all days —
Immune from Time's ephem'ral laws!

All that is wrought
Is first a thought,
Within the mind first had its form;
And that is why
It may not die,
For Death the mental cannot harm.

And men alone
By works are known;
All we may be in them shall show:
And truth they tell,
If ill or well,
Their measure we cannot forego.

September 17, 1905.

WHY NOT LET IT SLUMBER

Why should you come my way and stir afresh
The fires of that all most extinguished passion,

Which through these months I've labored hard to crush,
And teach the painful lesson of submission?
Full long I starved it and deemed it must be dead;
Ah! what else can endure such time without food?
As tenacious as Byron's, I find it had not fled;
By a single glance its vigor was renewed.

Only a look — what power could it yield
To add fresh fuel to the smoldering flame,
Which deep in my heart I thought I had concealed,
In a stubborn effort to defeat its claim?
We are told to starve by way of disposition,
A passion to which disappointment is given,
But virtueless I hold the proffered prescription, —
In fairness of test its fallacy have proven.

The pang of hopeless love is that it remains
To sadden and lessen the fullest after hour; —
To dull the ear to Music's noblest strains,
Or blind the eye to Beauty's witching power.
'Twere merciful if the heart could love again, —
Could forget by whom its passion was undone,
And bow to one of the many in the train
Of hearts its fervor could have easily won.

And yet that life will aspire to approach the worth
Of a love the heart has entertained in vain,
And the new ideals which thus acquire their birth
Must surely prove the nature's gen'ral gain;

So Love cannot be fruitless; it must reward
  Whoever lets it enter in his heart;
From its encounter we may turn away scarred,
  But of the Universe a nobler part!

September 28, 1905.

TILL I MET YOU

Not always seemed the world so bright as now —
  There was a time when days were much the same,
Beyond whose tasks to soothe my weary brow
  No real sufficient object could I name.
To dull existence I had learned to bow
  And thought my heart incapable of flame;
But, dear, there came a day when I met you,
And life addressed herself to me anew.

I had not lived till then, for life pertains
  To days whose passing records growth of soul;
I knew you but to strive for higher planes,
  And purpose came to combat sin's control;
My heart attuned itself to joyous strains,
  And moments breathed with interest manifold.
O, had I known you earlier, those years
Had not been wasted, dear — not shed these tears!

I know if love for you had touched me not,
  Much less of good my nature had revealed;
I should have striven less to raise my lot;

To best in me has God, through you, appealed;
And my old self lies buried on the spot
Whence thou appeared; and most its wounds are healed.
The sum of all the years my past life knew
Meant less than one, since I met you.

October 17, 1905.

WHY I'M SAD TO-DAY

Why am I sad to-day? canst thou not guess,
Dear Evelyn? for thou art good at such,
And knowest somewhat this moody heart, beside;
Whose varied feelings I've confided much,
Because a common cord they seemed to touch;
Then try, and if thou fail I will confess.
"Perhaps some dreamed-of fame has been denied?
Some friend proved faithless to the name?
The motive of some impulse been belied?
Or does that painful knowledge urge its claim —
Of something loved which cannot long abide?"

'Tis that; I'm sad that summer's end is nigh,
And though she comes again with charms as great
I'm not consoled, for not as now this heart will be;
Some freshness shall be lost beneath the weight
Of seriousness that fading hopes create.
And when she spreads again before my eye
Some loved ones may be lost to time and me,

Whose presence gave a charm to dullest things,
Or heightened that of flower, sky, or tree;
And thus the joy I find in what she brings
Shall nevermore attain the same degree.

October 27, 1905.

BURNING YOUR LETTERS

Too sweet, too tender, to burn, are they, —
These words you penned in fancy's sway,
Thinking close to the heart they lay;
And yet are they but painful fetters
Of a ling'ring passion that should be dead, —
That should, as the summer that gave it, have fled,
And this is a source on which it has fed, —
These false and vainly-treasured letters!

Once more let me read them, once more their lines trace,
As we turn again to the sleeper's face,
Ere the grave engulfs its beauty and grace;
Thus would I view once more these letters.
And calmly then will I watch the flame
Devour your thoughts, and even your name!
Nor any more your fickleness blame,
But forget it all in the fate of these fetters.

November 17, 1905.

TO MATTIE

Most lovely didst thou appear to-night,
But not for me those eyes shone bright,

As if 'twere Love that gave them light;
And yet not Love — since your fickle heart
Could scarce be pierced by Cupid's dart,
But finds delight in the empty game
To which flirtation owes its name.
More beautiful thou than Juliet!
Whose charms by thine had quickly set;
And hadst thou been a Capulet's guest,
With thee his suit had Romeo prest,
And the great love tale of Shakespearian fame
Had made thy own its heroine's name.
But I forget — scarce were it fair
Such varied hearts to thus compare,
And with you there, that tragic end
To their young lives had never been;
His love you had taken not to re-give,
Nor Juliet had ceased to live.
I wish you had been there, then I
Had saved myself full many a sigh.
Fair Lady, success I give to thy art,
But weep for the day when thy surfeited heart
Shall tire of its game and seek in vain
To arouse a feeling of a tender strain.
If then I be near, but let me know,
If comfort I can bring to thy woe,
But alas! I fear a heart thus waste,
For the joys of life has lost all taste.

November 18, 1905.

USING TO-DAY

Another day! oh, may I strive,
While yet it stays to be alive, —
To waste no more the pregnant hours
By trifling with my various powers,
Allotted me to cultivate and use,
And not to stifle by abuse.
Some days were lost before I learned
What energies within me burned;
I longed for strength to accomplish things,
While in me slept the hidden springs
Of force, untapped; — enough to dispose
Of any task life might disclose.
As the cocoon bursts at length his shell,
So man throws off his lethargic spell,
And to-day is here! and I am strong
To face whate'er it brings along.
To know how to use it — is knowledge supreme; —
The solution of life's problem, I deem.
It contains some needs so very great,
A morrow cannot compensate;
A word to-day may urge some on
When from their bosoms hope has gone, —
May relieve the heart that breaks to-morrow
Beneath the burden of its sorrow.
The wretch whose deeds had cast him down,
Might not repose beneath yon mound,
If I had stooped and helped to raise

Him from the level of his ways;
But all the tears I now may shed
Shall call him not from his lowly bed.
It passes but once along my way,
Then let me make it all I may,—
Deferring not its tasks till to-morrow,
For days from days should never borrow,
Since each is too full of its own affairs
To make up what another defers.

November 28, 1905.

THE POET

Do you wonder he bends above the flower so long,
Nor mindeth the presence of the passing throng;

Or what can so win him in the song of the bird,
Whose melody no cord in thy heart has stirred;

Why steals he away to walk by the murmuring shore,
As though its waves imparted some tangible lore;

What charm he can see in the ruin'd and broken arch
Which perished nations rear'd to Glory's march;

In musing on which his eyes with tears are filled,
And the heart throbs wildly and will not be stilled?

Thou canst perceive no cause for such emotion
As oft perturbs his soul like winds the ocean.

In the lowly life of insects int'rest he finds,
You deem it but an idle employment of minds.

So the author of the Chambered Nautillus discerns
Material for a poem of deepest concerns;

From the nature of this strange denizen of the sea
He gathered a lesson of immortality!

On the stars of heaven thou hast seen him gaze,
As though his soul would mingle with their rays;

And in such abstract moments o'er his face
Unwonted expression thou hast seemed to trace,

As if of Earth he ceased awhile to be
And held communion with Infinity.

In fact a creature so differing from you,
In vain you have tried his nature to construe.

Physical type pronounces you akin,
But oh, how opposite the life within!

Needs on his soul in those hours of musing wait,
Transcending thy power to appreciate.

You may have deem'd him alone in his moments apart
From the contact of man, — if so, mistaken thou art.

A spirit pervades those spots where he seems alone,
And gives them a life essential to his own.

He is no less than a favor'd child of the Muse,
And bathes his soul in her refreshing dews;

Who lifts his eyes beyond this passing scene,
To catch a glimpse of Heaven's fadeless sheen.

So let him dream — for lowly Earth may rise
On wings of some his thoughts till it cleave the skies.

December 13, 1905.

WHAT IS MY LIFE?

What is my life? I have not your love; —
What were all the treasure of the Earth beside?
To me it could no blessing prove,
With this one gift denied.

What can it mean but a weary flight
Of empty years? whose raven wings are all too slow
In bringing on that unconscious Night,
Whose kindly touch shall lull my woe.

In vain your sun shines bright, O Day!
Upon my head; or your sweet-scented zephyrs blow;
In vain you spring, O flowers of May!
Though once I loved you so!

But ah! since then a fairer form
Has filled my eye and left no room for aught beside;

Forgive my heart! 'tis not less warm
  Than then, but solely occupied

By one less mindful of me than you;
  Yet won me from you — and all that e'er could please
Ere its beauty met my view,
  To be the shrine of my loyal knees.

O could I return to that olden time
  Before my heart had narrowed the orbit of its love!
And barred the portal to joy's clime,
  By fixing one object therein to move. —

When people and things could win its affection,
  And fill each passing day with more for which to live,
And just beyond that Present's benediction
  Stood the future, with so much to give!

But one bright dream had not then come
  To eclipse the rest, and then — yes, then — itself to fade;
Whose very conception was fraught with doom!
  What did I, Eros, this curse should be laid?

January 1, 1906.

DAY BY DAY

Gaining a little day by day,
  In the way that leads to purer living,
Despite these lusting bonds of clay,
  And all the soul's arrayed misgiving.

Subduing self and its attributes,
  Which sadly hinder man's advance,
And feed him on their bitter fruits,
  What time he yields to their fatal trance.

Learning pursuit of baser things
  But wakes in the heart it pleased, disgust,
Which resolves itself into timely wings,
  On which we mount above our lust;

But by degrees, as the nestling learns
  To gently tempt the unknown air,
Which soon its strengthened pinion spurns,
  As confidence replaces fear.

Nor need is there to despair because
  At times we mark not the gain we make;
For 'tis as true as Nature's laws,
  That upward steps we daily take.

Think how slow the coral grows,
  Deep buried beneath the ocean's waves,
And how its beautiful branches compose
  A million animalcula's graves;

Whose purpose is seen but in their death,
  Which like their life is not in vain,
For when we pluck their sepulchral wreath,
  Beauty and Art are in the gain.

Each forward step — each Virtue acquired,
  Which marks the growth of Mind and Soul,

Denotes some Passion at last out-warred,
And taught to submit its blighting control.

And thus like the coral the temples we build
Are founded on graves — on Passions subdued;
With which we warred until they were killed —
Until we had drunk their hearts' best blood!

We will not retreat! but still war on
And gain new ground each coming day;
Until the Morn of our triumph shall dawn,
And eternal peace succeed to the fray.

January 10, 1906.

PREVIOUS DISPOSITION

By some cold critic I may be reproved,
Because full oft 'twas Love my lyre has moved;
Why not dispose of him in anticipation,
And save him the trouble of his declamation?
I might bid him turn to Greece's lyrical son —
Beloved of the amorous Muse — Anacreon;
And note the theme which did his pen engage,
And kindle with delight his matchless page;
'Twas Love! and hence the charm of what he wrote,
Whose accents down the brow of ages float.
And Byron's master stanzas charm us so,
Because they breathe with Passion's fiery glow.
But for the pow'r of Love — how sad to thee!
Without its richest verse the world would be.
Or what writes Wilcox in these latter times,

Comparing with her early love-born rhymes?
I tell you they shall still enrapture the heart,
Though all her host of didactic ones depart!
The claims of the Muses always best appeal
Addressed to the heart; — the source of what we feel.
Let bard no more the heights of Parnassus ascend,
When Love forgets with the chords of his harp to blend!
For dull and pulseless and uncolored all
Are thoughts the mind, free of the heart, can call.
These respirations of my youthful pen
Most part are sentimental; — but what then?
The facts concerning poesy all prove
The kind that best can please is that of Love.
Should my Muse again unfurl her wing,
I shall, as best I can, attempt to sing;
And though within the heart the subject rise,
'Tis well; — its source I never can despise.

January 14, 1906.

TO HIS MAJESTY, THE SAFETY-PIN

Although we've been acquainted long,
And other themes my pen has done,
Not once have I burst into song
To count the honors thou hast won.

And thus it is we oft neglect
To give a word of kindly praise
To what deserves our best respect,
And proves the stay of needy days.

Thus far I've lived a bach'lor's life,
  Which is of some discomforts cursed,
But dawns its day of deepest strife
  When from their places buttons burst!

And oh! thou e'er didst intervene
  To save me from embarrassments;—
Wert ever near to come between,
  When buttons severed from my pants. —

Have held me up as best you could,
  When other friends have turned aside
From my distress, and heartless stood,
  On whom, in thought, I had relied.

Some day I may be married, and
  Most likely will discard you then;
But while I live I never can
  Forget how true a friend you've been!

And this event, if it transpires,
  May not defeat our intercourse,
For husbands, if they be not liars,
  At times still make thee their resource.

January 16, 1906.

WHAT A MAN SHOULD GIVE

A man should give more than merely a name
  To her who gives him her heart and its love;

To manhood he should have established a claim
Sufficient that gift's protection to prove.

His name should be honored where spoken of men,
In token of worth its bearer has shown
In moments of trial. How behaved he then?
With the best of his fellows held he his own?

Is he working out some purpose in life
Whose end is Honor, Fortune, or Fame?
If so, thou art safe in becoming his wife
And shall do well in owning his name.

For his is the way that leads to the best
That life can give to the earnest soul,
Which denies the right on its laurels to rest
While remains unchallenged a higher goal.

And oh, what chance to develop the good
And beautiful traits thy nature reflects,
And give greater scope to thy womanhood,
To consort with a man a Lord of his sex!

The man makes the name the bright thing it may seem,
Its charm is not native but simply a dower;
In him who bears it exists the beam
Which reflects on his title a grace and power.

Thou hath not gain'd in exchanging thy name
For one of a listless son of the Earth,
Who not as yet has asserted his aim
To prove to the world his genius and worth.

Then be not content with merely a name;
  Demand of thy suitor a supplement
Of worth, or promise of worth, with the same,
  Before thou pitchest with him thy tent.

February 4, 1906.

REJOICE WITH ME

Rejoice with me that I am young!
  As I rejoice with all who are; —
With all whose hearts are lightly strung,
  And quickened by an inward fire,
Which prompts each action, right or wrong,
  Of which it stops not to inquire.
O careless, trusting time of youth!
When only heart-throbs measure truth.

O pardonable illusion, thou,
  Which led some men to sweetly dream
Of a hidden Fount where Age might bow
  And bathe, and her lost youth redeem;
But diff'rent youth it did endow —
  Which knew no end to her regime;
And Time, her fickle paramour,
She spurned, and exiled from her shore.

Alas! we know 'twas but a fable, —
  That only prudent living can
Disclose the means by which we're able
  To stay this period of man;

But youth to prudence is a rebel;
  Then how shall we apply the plan?
O Youth, thou suicide! be thou more tame;
By thy excesses thou devour'st thy flame.

And now is the glowing time of Love;
  O! who shall spurn that time's strange power?
Tho' fatal to future peace it prove,
  Of all our life 'tis the sweetest hour.
Who cares for love that cannot move
  The heart? the kind which is the dower
Of Age, when sentiment is dead,
And the passionless mind controls instead.

Small cares the days can bring me now,
  With bonny youth yet by my side;
I deem no cloud shall dark this brow
  While in my heart she doth abide;
When I would weep, she contrives somehow
  To circumvent the rising tide,
And sends some pleasure to divert
The heart that fancied it was hurt.

April 12, 1906.

HEART DESOLATION

O for a great love of a great woman,
To enter my life and reclaim its forces
From the nightmare of their lawless courses,

To a plane above the vulgar human!
Is the cry my heart multiplies in vain,
Then dashes into intemp'rance again.
Will she ever come? or is she lost to Earth,
And on some other Planet has her birth?
At times I've thought her a fabled creation, —
A vision of the heart in its desolation;
And again in misty distance I seem to trace
Her seraph form, as she walks to my embrace:
And when she is here, good-by to the siren throng,
With hearts for whomsoever comes along.
'Twas folly, my heart, to fancy for long that these
With their false and transferable affections could please;
From the first thou demanded a truer glow
Than negotiable bosoms can e'er bestow.
Though their arts engaged thee for awhile —
The softened word and mechanical smile,
Thou art sick of it all; yet where canst thou flee
In all the wide world that these shall not be?
Yet hope thee; as the Pharaoh's daughter
Found Moses cribbed beside the water,
And saved him from her father's brute decree,
So yet may this true woman rescue thee;
And give thee in her great pure heart a home,
Beyond whose gates thou ne'er shalt care to roam;
By which the palace of the Egyptian king
That housed the Hebrew babe were a paltry thing.
And irrigated by her great womanhood's love,
Thy desert shall become as the Vale of Nile,

Where harvest upon harvest doth swiftly move,
By nature's novel plan of enriching the soil.
No more would rise thy cry for mortal need,
Her love would be thy universal creed,
Solving the problems Life and Death array,
And robbing Skepticism of its prey.
Cry on, my heart, who could reverse thy fate
Has heard thee not; or else she tarries late.

April 29, 1906.

THOSE EYES OF BLUE

Turn away from me those eyes of blue,
  For oh! there's danger in their gaze;
The greatest danger man e'er knew, —
  The pow'r to bless — the pow'r to craze.
  None meet them to depart their ways
As calm as they had been before;
  Upon the heart their image preys,
As sweetheart's eyes watch from the shore
The ship which hence her lover bore.

Too long for future peace, I fear,
  Those eyes have looked into my own,
If these disquietudes which stir
  My heart, true witnesses depone.
  O sweetest eyes! come and atone
The deed, and give me back my peace,

Or else my presence but prefer,
And joy is mine beyond increase,
A joy no wealth of Earth could lease.

May 16, 1906.

A PASSING FACE

You looked into my face and passed your way,
Which has not been my own since that sweet day,
And oh! the thought it nevermore may be,
Is fraught with sorrow to this heart of me.
O Time and Fate, shall our two paths twice blend,
Ere we this mortal pilgrimage do end?

No one saw our greeting, yet we spoke,
As ship hails sister ship, our souls awoke,
And silently embraced; then tenderly
Put each away, perhaps till Eternity;
Well knowing the while we were each other's own, —
Kindred as two roses one bush has blown.

To the hard law that Circumstance had made
For us, we bow'd, though times I did upbraid
This false God, for cruel as Death is he,
And makes things other than what they should be.
To conquer him the soul must battle do
So great that the victorious are but few.

And, unknown one, I've thought if down life's track
We could have gone the journey arm in arm,

On more refulgent deeds I might look back,
Which love of you had led me to perform.
This was denied me, and even your name and sphere,
But to know you are, makes the Universe more dear.

June 15, 1906.

LOST

Oh, for the woman my fathers knew!
Whose heart to the call of her sex was true;
And lived her destined life.
No more she deems it her chief duty to be
A mother with children aplay at her knee, —
A loved and loving wife.

Behold to-day! she's abroad in the world,
By the side of man her banner is furl'd,
Pitting herself 'gainst strife;
Crowding him out from the things he has done
Through all the hundreds of years that are gone,
Unfulfilling her life!

Acquiring a bold and masculine front,
In place of the ways which were her wont, —
Transmuting her woman's nature;
Becoming a man in thought and in deed,
Which is to descend from a flow'r to a weed, —
From a pure to a vulgar creature.

Once man could retreat from himself and his cares
To that inviolate kingdom of hers, —

Of wife and motherhood;
Whose life was all apart from his own,
To the sin and strife of the world unknown;
And have his strength renewed.

And then to the call of his life go out,
With heart more pure and sweet and stout.
For what was left behind,
To cheer again his return at eve
With love which knows not to deceive,
And which we do not bind.

Poor man! these things are sadly chang'd,
And woman's thought from home estrang'd,
Which now becomes a name;
And yet they say it holds him not,
And that his duty is forgot,
Nor own themselves to blame.

For her who ne'er has known the bliss
That lives within her baby's kiss,
My heart runs o'er with tears;
For she has missed the sweetness of life,
And with her nature been at strife,
And great are her arrears.

I'd say to her with desires to achieve
Some position which Fame shall interweave
With his uncertain self;
For which her name will ring a day,

Then like a bell tone fade away,
Go put them on a shelf!

Let Nancy Stair's solution of life,
Who denied her genius to be a wife,
With babies at her breast,
And put away her much-loved pen
That she might be a mother of men,
For you the question test.

That there were more such women as she!
Scotland! art thou not proud to be
The land that gave her birth?
Who gave you song, and more, her blood
Transmitted in a holy flood,
In legacy to earth.

That unborn son of yours may shame
In deeds the greatest prev'ous name,
Which hist'ry hands us down;
Thetis' son may disrepute,
Or e'en a Cæsar's fame refute,
Though great þe their renown.

For him the world is dying fast,
Oh! bear him ere the need be past,
Which he the best can fill;
Behold therein your noblest work,
Nor more aspire to petty clerk,
And bid your heart be still.

You cannot still its cry for children!
And know ye 'tis a mighty omen
    No woman can afford
To spurn; though all the world be given,
Not till in child-birth she has striven
    Shall happiness reward.

June 30, 1906.

TWO WORDS

There are two words which do convey
    Unto my soul supremest doom,
And were they tangible, I'd slay
    And place them in the deepest tomb. —

The crime of Cain reiterate,
    And think as Brutus that the deed,
Like his to Cæsar, were expiate
    In the prevalency of its need.

These fatal words are these, "He failed";
    Alas! of man they should be said,
Whose obstacles should be assailed
    And crushed e'en as the serpent's head.

And only have men failed because
    They lacked the knowledge of their power
To overwhelm all hostile laws
    And circumstances of the hour

Wherein they wrought; which known, they'd scorn
  The instruments of their defeat,
And wish they ne'er had been born
  Than such profound reproach to meet.

Should the wolf dispute the lion's path
  And drive him from his purposed way,
Who in his hour of anger hath
  The pow'r to make all beasts his prey,

How should we scorn that lion! and take
  From him his ancient reputation;
But he's self-known, nor e'er will quake
  And lose his dignity of station.

The man who fails deserves like scorn.
  As easily as the lion defeats
His enemies, each man that's born
  Can crush the obstacles he meets.

His pow'r is greater than the gods
  Which olden Greece and Rome adored,
For they have held their last synods, —
  Past mortals' call forever soared.

At least did ne'er exist but in
  His fancy, which created them;
And the creator needs have been
  Yet greater than his peopled realm.

He has awakened from his night
  Wherein to plural gods he bow'd,
And seeing with a clearer sight,
  But one true Deity allow'd.

Oh, let him not disgrace Him then,
  By ill-directing the energies
Which he hath amply given men
  To use in their necessities.

His highest creature was not made
  To turn aside from hindrances,
More than the avalanche hath play'd
  Around its course's rocks and trees.

But dashing through them sweep along
  Undaunted till the goal is won,
While they shall bruised and bleeding throng
  And ask the way that he has gone.

The man who fails commits a crime
  On which no pardon doth await;
Not in Eternity nor Time
  Shall that offense be expiate.

How should he fail whom God has given
  Such ample pow'r with which to win? —
A mind almost as high as heaven,
  Though oft debased to depths of sin.

Oh, may the day come quickly on
When man shall know his proper power,
Then on his efforts there will dawn
Success; and failure fly his bower.

Shall those same words be said of me
Who here my hate for them declare?
Ah no, it must not — shall not be!
Their ignomy I will not share.

September 2, 1906.

YE SILENT STRINGS

Composed upon viewing a collection of stringed instruments in the National Museum at Washington.

Collected here from many climes,
Ye strings of other days,
I'm dwelling now upon the times
That echoed to your lays; —
The days that Minstrelsy did live
To lighten care with song,
And call man forth full oft to give
Himself to Pleasure's throng:

Ere love of gold preferred its claim
And vetoed lighter arts,
Ere it enslaved in awful shame
The tuneful notes of hearts,

And transformed man to a machine
To manufacture gold,
Which is the end — his life the mean;
How basely is it sold!

Ye silent strings, where are the hands
That once thy numbers told?
Do they strike chords on other strands
On instruments of gold?
Did their souls' taste for music grow
Beyond your pow'r to yield,
Till ye consented they might go
And seek an equal field?

Where are the lips that love's sweet note
In ecstasy did breathe?
Does Love still on its object dote,
Or is this death a Lethe?
And where those eyes? — forever closed?
No more acquaint with tears?
Answer, Death! 'twas you deposed
The beauty which was theirs.

Arouse, ye drowsy strings, and tell
Me as in tears I gaze,
Where are the hearts that once did swell
Unto thy buoyant lays?
Beyond the placid sunset shoals
Did Death their home bestow,

Where ignorance no more controls,
  And they life's myst'ry know?

Reply of you in vain I seek,
  Ye deeply-slumb'ring strings;
Will ye no more forever speak,
  Ye speech-disdaining things?
Or would your tones break in a wail
  Too sad to greet my ear,
For times and forms beyond the Vale
  Where floweth mortal tear?

Adieu, sleep on, your work is done;
  And no mean work it was;
Ye gladdened hearts: beneath the sun
  Preferred is he who does.
If aught ye know of their abode
  Who once your patrons were,
No more I ask it be bestowed
  Upon my hungry ear.

In His good time Who knoweth all
  Much shall unfolded be,
Of things which darkly now befall,
  And puzzle you and me.
And I believe He lets us see
  As far as it were good;
And where the limitations be,
  'Tis best for us they should.

September 7, 1906.

DO WE DIE BUT ONCE?

Must one forego his breath and lie
  A senseless form before man's gaze
Ere he be credited to die?
  Ah no! death comes in other ways.

Not till reclining on our bier
  Do we confess to mortal death;
But oh! the deaths that often tear
  The soul, untestified in breath.

For there be lips that scorn to ope
  And tell the anguish that's within;
Those who prefer alone to cope,
  And unassisted fall or win.

And many graves their spirits know,
  From which, Christ-like, they rose again,
To live despite the taunt and blow
  Of crucifying fellow-men.

Scarce man has lived but has not been
  A murderer! maybe unhung,
And yet full guilty that dark sin,
  For words or deeds of his that stung

To death the heart on which they fell.
  And this death's violence passeth that
Which e'er to eye was visible,
  Where signs of common death have sat.

For some do pass as peacefully
  As sink to sleep the weary;
Embrace their change so gracefully
  We scarce would wish them tarry.

But like to pangs of that sharp kind
  Dropp'd from the womb of Gethsemane,
Where agony did exit find
  In excrement of blood's degree,

Are these same deaths we inly die.
  They are no bastard progeny!
Would'st speak with them when they draw nigh?
  They'll answer to — Gethsemane!

Gethsemane! wilt thou ne'er cease
  To get thee more posterity?
Hath not thy bountiful increase
  Attested thy fertility?

I must be careful lest I kill
  By some unkindness or neglect,
Or ills ingratitudes distil,
  Some spirit meeting my contact.

For some are tender as the first
  Frail flower that salutes the spring;
At lightest shocks their heart strings burst;
  They vibrate to each passing sting.

Such depth of sensibility
  Their finer temper'ments contain,

That acts of slightest enmity
  Present to them aspects of pain.

This death's rare wealth in Precedent
  Extenuates its bitterness
To us in order consequent,
  For His great sympathy doth bless!

I crave it for the fellowship
  Its visitation guarantees
With Him who to his conquer'd lip
  Press'd death's sharp cup of agonies!

And as in that dark hour was given
  The strength to conquer over pain,
When I have similarly striven,
  His aid shall not be sought in vain.

I not disdain the sepulchers
  That in my bosom find repose:
They represent spent blood and tears
  And triumphs that a spirit knows!

We die, but like the Phœnix rise
  From our own dust, in grand defy,
And purified, since all dross dies
  In tests where essence must reply.

October 15, 1906.

BY BERNARD GRADY

SPECTATOR OR SPECTACLE

I would not choose to walk the way of life
  Without a thorn to wound my treading feet,
For if it have no fellowship with strife,
  The rest it leads unto will be less sweet.
The travail of our efforts discipline
  The quality of joy the harvest yields,
And that which costs us little pain to win
  The highest charm of its possession steals.

I would not sit in Fortune's sunny halls;
  No soulful physic flows from cups of ease;
But they who answer duty's hallow'd calls,
  And to no other Goddess bow their knees,
Perform a pageant on life's highway
  More grand than those by kings and princes made,
In ostentation of some special day
  Which doth in newer honors to them trade.

For what do such denote but vanity?
  They satisfy the eye but not the soul;
But in the strivings of humanity
  Are pageantries our truest parts extol!
And they pass not away with the beholding,
  Like petty things that merely entertain
The pilgrim hour that chances their unfolding,
  And for their levity, unnamed again.

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But do incorporate themselves into
  Each particle of truth the world contains,
And on all senior truth fall like a dew
  And kiss its harden'd face to softer strains:
For from its first encounter truth is fresh,
  Nor dreams how oft the foe will test its steel,
But often-tried, its aspect waxeth harsh
  And menacing to all seeks its repeal.

And since in truth they carry heavy stock,
  Our noble deeds defy oblivion's power;
To Time's wide-cance'ling agents give the mock,
  And swear attendance on his latest hour.
Who piled on high the mighty pyramid
  Did pageantry that awes this distant day,
And ancient Greece and Rome our wonder bid,
  Such world-inspiring pageants were they!

In life we are Spectators or Spectacles; —
  The passing pageant or looker-on:
Like lusty harvesters throw in our sickles,
  Or imitate the idle bee, call'd drone.
Who would not rather do the deed than shout
  In praise of it when other hand has done?
We have our choice, and lay our own course out, —
  Spectator or Spectacle — star or sun.

I seek the place where things shall sternly prove
  My naked worth; and they shall acids be,

Whose action is false surface to remove;
O subject me to their sharp chemistry!
And as they eat away the false in coin,
If it contain compound of counterfeit,
So my defective parts they shall disjoin
From what is substance and will not submit.

Yes, place me where the battle is the strongest!
Where obstacles on ev'ry side abound;
On that same field whose conflict lasts the longest,
There is the only consecrated ground!
There I, contending, may do pageant
That shall suggest man past his best endeavor;
Create resolve in who are diffident,
And falsify the limits some discover.

October 23, 1906.

A TRIBUTE TO TRUST

No mathematician can ever compute
The sum of the good that trusting has done;
The harvests of lives that have come to their fruit
From the sun and showers of trusting alone!

Where native ambition is never at flood,
Foreboding scant fraughtage on some life's tide,
The physic of trust augmenteth the mood,
Till deep-drawing craft on its channel may ride.

The stars I have reached in number and brilliance
Would fill a less firmament far than they do,

And more of my days been wedded to dalliance,
  Had trust ne'er revealed her face to my view.

I thank the blest soul, or souls it may be,
  For that rare moment enlinked with the past,
Which argued to them some fulfilment in me, —
  Some unmatured fruit they sought to foretaste.

For then I became an heir to their trust, —
  The kindliest spur ever urged me on,
Whose prickings I deem in effect most just,
  And without them should have fewer miles gone.

To the fire my bosom's ambition enkindled,
  That trust of theirs was a fuel most rare;
Unnourish'd of which it might have low-dwindled,
  And finally died in the lap of despair.

But the trust they reposed I could not disappoint,
  However my heart its own int'rest excused;
When my energy lagged their belief did anoint
  And the spirit that won into me infused.

'Twill be a small char'ty in you or in me,
  But an alms in riches surpassing all rate,
To regard each man as a personal fee,
  Sometime to be paid to our trust's estate.

The debt will assuredly meet reimbursement,
  If long enough Death withholdeth his check;

Surer of port than Antonio's shipment,
On which he loaned money and which endured wreck.

The moneys we loan oft never return,
Like Custer who rode on his blundering raid;
The notes we indorse, the owners oft spurn,
And the forfeits from our coffers are paid.

But never will man discountenance give
To the fee our trust exacteth in deeds;
And the recompense we may hope to receive
Shall balance whatever trust's meter reads.

Our trust is too selfish; too closely it keeps
To its comfortable room in the house of the heart;
And lacking its visit some energy sleeps,
And subtracts its due from life's busy mart.

It needs to be tutor'd to bounteous uses,
Like the torrent-swell'd Nile it should learn to dilate,
Till over the banks of the heart it rushes
And delivers increase to the human estate.

And never did Nile's rich Valley produce
Such harvests as then their hands would deliver;
And the souls whose trust made their lives so profuse
Shall rival in good that remarkable river.

I propose a new party whose issue shall be,
More trust in men! whose politics fail

Because in the sev'ral platforms they decree,
This plank is exempt from the carpenter's nail.

He may slay his mind in search of the way
By which to advance his political state,
And all his methods conduct him astray,
Till his heart instructs him trust is the gate.

November 8, 1906.

THE DEAD

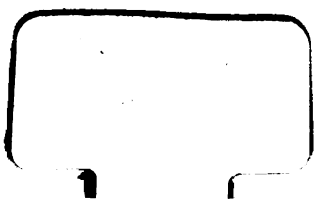
My heart, cannot the present your attention stead,
That ye anon turn longingly unto the dead,
As ye would pluck them back from their removed abode
To do again the labors of this earthly road?
They are delivered, as the mother from the pain
Of her first-born, or heavy cloud that bursts in rain.
But some deliveries are dear and often kill
Who do deliver and who help'd the act fulfill.
Ask the young husband who has yielded up his bride
When scarce the vows were cold which link'd her to his side,
And seen a happy future shorten'd to a year,
With life unpropertied to him forever here!
'Tis likely he can tell you what deliv'ry means
To those with int'rest in the subjects of such scenes.

And I should happy be that they no more are torn
By thorns which flourish here and in our hearts are worn.
But O! their points are sharper since the ear is dull

Which did receive the heart beyond retention full —
Whose comfort-yielding voice is hearken'd for in vain —
Whose magic touch is absent from the spot of pain:
They were so necessary to our fortitude!
We might the firmer stand had they beside us stood.
But as some frailer tree emplanted near an oak,
Which one day falls to earth beneath the woodman's stroke,
Is left without protection from the storm's attack,
Are we who in our woes the fallen bulwark lack.
And heavily we sigh in mem'ry of the arms
Which once did corral us from all approach of harms.

And so my heart oft flies its duty to the living
To speak the dead: I hope the crime may be forgiving.
Who are the dead? Are they not also days or places —
The nurs'ry tale or fickle friendship's empty vases —
The beauty that did make a Goddess of a mortal,
And which we've seen escape by some remorseless portal —
Maybe the echo of those silver-pealing chimes
Emitted from some living heart in absent times —
Perhaps the word of love that tremb'ling found expression,
Or rapture of the heart that answer'd its vibration; —
That we recall as though their subjects too were dead,
Because no more we banquet on their meat and bread.
And thus the living are the dead in their remove —
In the inconstant orbits fashion'd by their love.

Unnamed, recallest thou those early-blighted days,
Which briefly join'd together — then divorced our ways?
Dost think they ever will a resurrection know?

That in their ashes doth a spark of essence glow?
Or Love may yet awake them from their fair youth's grave
And from a further separating Angel save?
Or that they too are disembodied and interred
Beyond the pow'r of Love's reanimating word?
I can but hope; and if they are forever fled,
I here confess my heart is often with the dead!
Who e'en from the perspective of the tomb attract
And from a vital present's needs our thoughts extract.
The dead! can they be dead who thus the living draw?
In them must linger yet some share of life's sweet law.

December 2, 1906.